

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: John Wheeldon Primary Academy

Corporation Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 3LX

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 June 2025

Outcome

John Wheeldon Primary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Claire Clarke. This school is part of Staffordshire University Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), James Capper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mary Walker.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to John Wheeldon Primary Academy. This is a school that increasingly lives its 'PROUD' values of perseverance, respect, outstanding, unique and dynamic. As one pupil, typical of many, stated to the inspector: 'All the pupils are kind, and helpful teachers help John Wheeldon be as great as it is.'

The school has high expectations for behaviour, which pupils understand. This means that they typically listen in class, try their hardest and behave in a considerate way at social times. Pupils know that adults will support them to meet the school's behaviour expectations. Pupils know that difference is accepted and celebrated in this diverse school. They understand that staff will listen to their worries or concerns and will support them. Pupils feel safe at the school.

Pupils enjoy the many activities that the school organises for them. These include two residential trips, a trip to the beach and visits to local attractions. Pupils also enjoy the many sports activities and forest school provision. The school council works well with leaders to help make improvements at the school. These include the provision of playground equipment and developments to encourage a love of reading, such as a 'reading shed'.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has worked to review and refine its curriculum in response to its last inspection. This has focused on subject leadership and ensuring that teachers understand the key knowledge pupils need to remember in each subject. In subjects such as geography, history and French, for example, this is secure, meaning pupils learn the curriculum well.

Checks on pupils' understanding typically indicate when they are secure in their learning or when they need further support. However, this is not yet consistent, and there are occasions when gaps in learning are not spotted and closed. This means some pupils learn the curriculum less well.

The school identifies clearly the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It ensures that teachers have the information that they need to adapt the learning for these pupils. When appropriate adaptations are put in place, these pupils learn the curriculum well.

In the main, the school has established its approach to early reading successfully. It provides pupils who need extra support to learn to read with the help that they need. However, as in other subjects, the school does not make sure that some gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and acted on effectively. This holds back some pupils' progress in phonics.

Due to staff's effective teaching of the curriculum, children in early years mostly learn essential information well. However, on occasion, the school does not ensure that some tasks are designed well enough to support and extend children's subject knowledge. This means that sometimes children have gaps in their understanding. This affects their readiness for key stage 1.

The school has reviewed its approach to the management of pupils' behaviour. Its expectations are high, with a particular focus on rewarding pupils in line with the school's values. The school is typically calm in lessons and at social times. However, not all staff follow the school's agreed behaviour approach consistently, especially for some pupils who need additional support to meet the school's high expectations. This means that sometimes the school's high expectations for pupils' conduct are not consistently upheld. The school has a systematic approach to improving pupil attendance. It works effectively with parents and external agencies to support pupils to attend regularly.

The school has extensive and carefully considered provision for pupils' personal development. This is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets pupils' needs. The provision clearly links to the school's PROUD values, and helps pupils consider how they can show these in their conduct. There are opportunities to help pupils to be ready for life in modern Britain. A significant range of trips and local visits help pupils to learn outside the classroom.

The local academy council and trustees are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Members of the local academy council are well-informed about the school and offer appropriate support and challenge. Working with leaders in the school, the trust has taken effective action to secure necessary and rapid improvements in the school. Leaders have an accurate evaluation of the school. They engage appropriately with staff around developments in provision and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not yet ensured that all staff use assessment effectively to identify when pupils have fully understood their learning. As a result, on occasion, gaps in pupils' learning are not identified and closed. The school should ensure that assessment is used effectively to check pupils' understanding and that gaps in learning or misconceptions are closed through the teaching of the curriculum.
- There are inconsistencies in the application of the school's revised approach to the management of pupil behaviour. This means that the school's raised expectations are not consistently applied for some pupils who need specific support. Leaders should ensure that staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently, using the information provided for those pupils who need additional support to meet the school's expectations.
- In the early years, some learning activities do not support key areas of learning for some children well enough. This means that gaps in curriculum knowledge for these children can persist. The school should ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of the children's needs and use this to design and target activities to build children's learning securely.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the

last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141186
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10344040
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	547
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mary Walker
CEO of the trust	James Capper
Principal	Claire Clarke
Website	www.johnwheeldonacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of 21 in the Staffordshire University Academies Trust.
- Then principal was appointed in September 2024.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered

the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- As part of this inspection, the inspector met with senior leaders, subject leaders, teaching staff and other employees in the school. The inspector also talked informally to pupils to gather general information about school life. He also met trustees and members of the local academy council. Trust and local academy council minutes were scrutinised as well as records of visits.
- The inspector met with the trust CEO and Deputy CEO and reviewed their support for the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector discussed with leaders and pupils the school's extra-curricular activities and provision for pupils' personal development.
- The inspector reviewed a sample of the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including plans to improve the school.
- The inspector met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. He took account of responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. The inspector also spoke with a selection of parents informally.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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